

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 HA-05 /040 W

-----072426 220936Z /11

R 211505Z AUG 78

FM AMCONSUL DURBAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3027

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT,SF

SUBJ: NATAL NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS

REF: A. PRETORIA 4800 B. PRETORIA 4801 C. PRETORIA 4770

1. SUMMARY: THE NATAL NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS, THE FIRST OF THE PARTY'S FOUR PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES, PROVIDED LITTLE INSIGHT ON NEW DIRECTIONS OR EMPHASIS OF BASIC PARTY POLICY (THIS IS MORE LIKELY TO BE ADDRESSED, IF AT ALL, AT THE MORE IMPORTANT NAT CONGRESSES) BUT DID HIGHLIGHT THE VERLIGHTE-VERKRAMPTE TENSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY WHICH MAY SET THE TONE FOR SIMILAR CONFRONTATIONS AT THE OTHER CONGRESSES. THE RACIST UTTERANCES OF A VOCAL GROUP OF BACKWARD LOOKING DELEGATES ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD PRESS COMMENT, INCLUDING A REBUKE BY AN INFLUENTIAL AFRIKAANS EDITOR, AND REQUIRED THE EFFORTS OF INDIAN AFFAIRS MINISTER MARAIS STEYN TO QUELL. MAJOR ADDRESSES WERE GIVEN BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE JIMMY KRUGER ON SAG ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ORGANIZATIONS (REF A); LABOR MINISTER FANIE BOTHA ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD S.A. AND THE ENCROACHMENT OF COMMUNISM (REF B); MINISTER OF PLURAL RELATIONS CONNIE MULDER ON BASIC SAG POLICY TOWARD BLACKS (REF C); MINISTER

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OF DEFENSE P.W. BOTHA ON THE NAMIBIAN SITUATION (SEPTTEL) AND MINISTER OF FINANCE OWEN HORWOOD (HEAD OF THE NATIONAL PARTY IN NATAL) ON BASIC SAG ECONOMIC POLICY WHICH INCLUDED A STATEMENT THAT THE SAG WAS NOT CONTEMPLATING REVALUING THE RAND AND THAT IT WAS USING THE INCREASED FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS FROM THE RISING PRICE OF GOLD TO RETIRE SHORT-TERM FOREIGN BORROWINGS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. AN ISSUE EXPECTED TO BE PROMINENTLY

DISCUSSED, THE STATUS OF THE SAG'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, WAS GLOSSED OVER IN SPEECHES, WITH THE INFERENCE THAT IT IS STILL UNDER REVIEW AND SUBJECT TO REVISION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON AUGUST 16-18 IN DURBAN THE NATIONAL PARTY IN NATAL HELD ITS FIRST ANNUAL CONGRESS SINCE ITS IMPRESSIVE SHOWING IN LAST YEAR'S GENERAL ELECTION IN WHICH IT GAINED FIVE PARLIAMENTARY SEATS (FOR A TOTAL OF 10 OUT OF 20 IN THE PROVINCE) AND CAME WITHIN THREE SEATS OF WRESTING CONTROL OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL FROM THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP). THE CONGRESS PRODUCED LITTLE OF NEW NATIONAL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. MAJOR ADDRESSES OF THE PARTY LEADERS HAVE LARGELY BEEN REPORTED IN REFTELS. THE ISSUE MOST OBSERVERS EXPECTED TO BE HIGHLIGHTED, THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, WAS LARGELY IGNORED IN PUBLIC SESSIONS AND THE IMPRESSION OF PARTICIPANTS AND PRESS OBSERVERS IS THAT THE PARTY IS STILL REVIEWING THE PROPOSALS WITH AN EYE TO REVISING THEM SUFFICIENTLY TO ATTRACT MORE SUPPORT FROM COLORED AND INDIAN LEADERS.

3. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT OF THE CONGRESS WAS THE CONTROVERSY WHICH ENSUED FOLLOWING HEATED DISCUSSIONS ON THE QUESTION OF ELIMINATION OF PETTY APARTHEID. A SMALL BUT VOCAL GROUP OF OLDER, VERKRAMPTE DELEGATES FROM NORTHERN NATAL OPPOSED PROPOSALS TO DISMANTLE ANY PORTION OF APARTHEID AND ACCUSED THE LEADERSHIP OF MOVING TOO FAST ON INTEGRATION ISSUES. THEY ARGUED, IN SOME OF THE MOST RACIST TERMS RECENTLY USED IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PUBLIC BY NATIONAL PARTY MEMBERS, THAT SUCH STEPS THREATENED THE EXISTENCE OF THE WHITE WAY OF LIFE. THESE SENTIMENTS STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD AND WERE APPLAUDED BY A MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES. HOWEVER, THEIR STATEMENTS EARNED AN IMMEDIATE EDITORIAL REBUKE FROM THE EDITOR OF THE NATIONALIST PAPER DIE TRANSVALER, DR. WIMPIE DE KLERK, WHO ALSO CASTIGATED THE NATAL PARTY LEADERSHIP FOR LAX DISCIPLINE IN PERMITTING SUCH AN UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE. HIS COMMENTS IN TURN PROVOKED A DEFENSIVE RESPONSE FROM FINANCE MINISTER OWEN HORWOOD, HEAD OF THE PARTY IN NATAL, WHO EXPRESSED "SHOCK" THAT DE KLERK HAD WRITTEN OF THE CONGRESS IN SUCH A WAY WITHOUT CONSULTING FIRST WITH THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. HORWOOD DENIED DE KLERK'S ASSERTION THAT THE LEADERSHIP HAD LET THE DEBATE SLIP TO A LOW LEVEL BUT DID NOT PUBLICLY CONDEMN OR DISASSOCIATE THE PARTY FROM THE REMARKS, SAYING THE OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE HAD BEEN UTTERED IN THE HEAT OF DEBATE WHEN IT WAS THE RIGHT OF ANY DELEGATE TO PUT HIS VIEW TO THE CONGRESS. (A LOCAL PARTY LEADER TOLD US HORWOOD HAD APOLOGIZED PRIVATELY "IN HIS OWN WAY" FOR THE REMARKS.) IT FELL TO INDIAN AFFAIRS MINISTER MARAIS STEYN TO ATTEMPT TO CORRECT THE DAMAGE DONE TO THE PARTY'S IMAGE AND TO MOVE THE DEBATE INTO LESS CONTENTIOUS AREAS. IN HIS SPEECH FOLLOWING THE OUTBURSTS STEYN SAID THERE WERE ONLY

THREE AREAS WHERE NATIONALIST POLICY BELIEVED IT ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN APARTHEID AT ALL COSTS: GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS, RESIDENTIAL AREAS AND MIXED MARRIAGES. (THE SAME PARTY LEADER SAID STEYN HAD FORGOTTEN A FOURTH AREA, PARLIAMENT). HE INDICATED EVERYTHING ELSE WAS OPEN TO DISCUSSION AND WHITES SHOULD BE WILLING TO SHARE THEIR FACILITIES WITH ALL PEOPLE. HIS WELL-DELIVERED SPEECH ALSO RECEIVED WIDESPREAD SUPPORT, INDICATING THE DICHOTOMY OF VIEWS OF MANY DELEGATES.

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4. OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS MADE AT THE CONGRESS INCLUDE:

HORWOOD, SPEAKING AS FINANCE MINISTER, AGAIN DENIED THE NEED TO REVALUE THE RAND, STATING ITS TRADE-WEIGHTED VALUE HAD DROPPED BY ONLY 7 PERCENT THIS YEAR. HE ALSO SAID THE SAG WAS USING ITS INCREASED FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS FROM THE HIGHER PRICE OF GOLD TO RETIRE SHORT-TERM FOREIGN DEBTS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE, THEREBY IMPROVING ITS FOREIGN CREDIT IMAGE.

LABOR MINISTER BOTHA SEVERELY CRITICIZED CHIEF BUTHEELEZI FOR HIS REMARKS IN THE US CALLING FOR INCREASED INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO FORCE A NATIONAL CONVENTION IN SA.

THE ACCELERATED AND INCREASED CONSOLIDATION OF KWAZULU, COUPLED WITH FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES, WAS ADVOCATED BY SOME SPEAKERS AS A MEANS TO ENCOURAGE BUTHEELEZI TO OPT FOR INDEPENDENCE. A RESOLUTION URGING MULDER TO STUDY THIS WAS INTRODUCED AND WAS TO BE DEBATED IN CLOSED SESSION, WHERE WE UNDERSTAND VERKRAMPTE WERE ABLE TO SIDETRACK THE ISSUE.

KRUGER, IN A LITTLE NOTED PORTION OF HIS ADDRESS (REF A)
STATED THERE WERE 151 PEOPLE ACCUSED IN THE 55 TERRORISM
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CASES IN PROGRESS IN SA AND 141 OTHERS WERE IN DETENTION UNDER
SECTION 6 OF THE TERRORISM ACT.

5. COMMENT: THE MOST CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL
PARTY IN NATAL (WHOM AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING EDITOR DESCRIBED AS
"FLAT-ERTHERS") SEEM TO HAVE SET THE TONE OF THE CONGRESS AND
TO HAVE UNDERScoreD THE FEARS OF A WHITE BACKLASH WHICH PROVIDES
THE EXCUSE THE NAT LEADERS OFTEN USE TO POSTPONE TAKING
STEPS TOWARD SOCIAL CHANGE. THE UNRECONSTRUCTED ATTITUDE
EXPRESSED BY SOME DELEGATES AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE
PARTY POLICY CLEARLY STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD AMONG MANY OF
THEIR COLLEAGUES AND, IF CONTINUED IN OTHER CONGRESSES,
COULD EXACERBATE THE POLITICAL TENSIONS AMONG THE HIERARCHY.
DEKLERK'S REPRIMAND OF THE NATAL LEADERSHIP FOR PERMITTING
THIS SITUATION TO DEVELOP SEEMED AS MUCH A RECOGNITION THAT
A REPETITION OF THESE EVENTS COULD FORCE AN UNWANTED CON-
FRONTATION IN THE PARTY AS IT WAS REBUKE OF THE LANGUAGE
AND VIEWPOINTS THEMSELVES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, PARTY MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DURBAN00476
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780342-1188
Format: TEL
From: DURBAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780844/aaaabkx.tel
Line Count: 198
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 43e35160-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PRETORIA 4800
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1681629
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NATAL NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS
TAGS: PINT, SF, NATIONAL PARTY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/43e35160-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014